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UNCLAS PRETORIA 005286

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICAN RESPONSE ON PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION

REF: STATE 246829

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

1. (SBU) Embassy conveyed reftel points to officials at Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). According to DEAT's Director for International Relations, Zaheer Fakir, his Department was invited but never participated in discussions regarding future governance of UNEP, and DEAT does not support the French proposal.

2. (SBU) DFA Multilateral Branch's Deputy Director for Conservation Elize Haber told EST Officer that South Africa's Ambassador to Nairobi attended the Stockholm meetings, which focused on UNEP's governing body rather than creation of a UN Environment Organization (UNEO). She noted that in light of South Africa's strong interest in UN reform, it remains open to discussion with France about its proposal. At present South Africa is unconvinced of the merits of transforming UNEP to a UNEO. The SAG believes the current governance structure works well. It shares USG concerns about the potential effectiveness of UNEO and the financial impact of creating UNEO, particularly on developing countries. In addition, South Africa is concerned about a possible move of any new organization from Nairobi to a location outside Africa. Haber also commented that her DEAT colleague did not appear to have complete information about the issue.

FRAZER